

US climate sceptics send shivers through Arctic cooperation

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It was the first time the Arctic Council, which held its first meeting in 1996, failed to present a final declaration at the end of a ministerial meeting

For the first time in over two decades, member states of the Arctic Council failed to agree on a final declaration at their bi-annual ministerial meeting on Tuesday, due to a US refusal to mention climate change.

At the start of the 11th gathering of Arctic foreign ministers, in the Lapland town of Rovaniemi, Finnish Foreign Minister Timo Soini announced a change to the planned agenda, saying the final joint declaration would be replaced by ministerial statements.

Several sources said it was because member states were unable to reach an agreement, with the United States alone refusing to mention climate change in the final text.

"I don't name and blame anybody," Soini, who chaired the meeting, told reporters.

"But of course it is clear that climate issues are different from the different viewpoints and the different capitals," he said.

In place of the traditional declaration, the council released a shorter "ministerial statement", which set out future goals for the organisation but conspicuously made no mention of climate change.

But Soini also took the unusual step of releasing much of the rejected declaration—complete with climate goals—as a "chair's statement".

"The hang up here right now is America making it hard to make a final agreement," Sally Swetzof of the Aleut International Association, one of six organisations representing indigenous peoples, told AFP.

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